

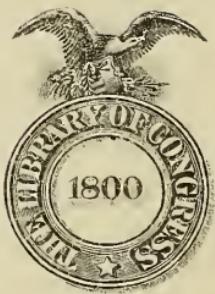
E 312

.43

.W23

Copy 1

Washington



Class E 312  
Book 43  
W 2.3









HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION  
OF THE OIL PAINTINGS OF

Mary, the Mother of Washington

AND

MARY PHILLIPSE

(Washington's Early Love)

By Middleton

Also, THE SHARPLES PAINTINGS

OF

Washington, and Martha, his Wife

AND OF

ROBERT FULTON and his WIFE

AND OF

PRIESTLEY and CHIEF-JUSTICE MARSHALL

Together with numerous beautiful American women  
of the Revolutionary period

Painted by Sharples

between the years 1794 and 1800

Compiled from *Memorials of Washington, his Wife, and Mother*, by Major James Walter, retired Major Fourth Lancashire Artillery. Published by Scribners, New York. Price, \$6.00. Contains twelve exquisite Autotypes of the Portraits, executed by the Autotype Company of London. The Volume may be purchased in the Exhibition Gallery.

MAJOR WALTER'S Work entitled "MEMORIALS OF WASHINGTON, AND OF MARY, HIS MOTHER, AND MARTHA, HIS WIFE," is just published by SCRIBNER'S SONS, of New York.

It is an elegantly printed volume of 362 pages, royal octavo size, and contains twelve of the portraits exquisitely reproduced by the Autotype Company of London.

The price of the work is Six Dollars, and it may be obtained in the room.

A special Edition de Luxe of the work has been prepared, printed on finest large quarto paper, with specially selected impressions of all the autotype portraits. Price, Twelve Dollars.

Photogravures of Mary Washington, and also that of Fulton, executed in the highest style of art by Annan, Her Majesty Queen Victoria's engraver, are ready for delivery in the order of subscription. None but proof impressions on India paper will for the time being be issued, and the number strictly limited to five hundred. Size of plates, 14x11½ inches, on imperial plate paper, 22x30 inches. Price, Fifteen Dollars.

Preference is given to the subscribers to the three original large autotypes of the Washingtons; *i. e.*, the full face and profile of General Washington and the profile of Martha Washington, and which may be subscribed for in the Exhibition Room at Twenty-five Dollars the set of three.

The beautifully executed autotype of Heath & Parkes' renowned oil painting of "PETER STUYVESANT'S ARMY ENTERING NEW YORK," may also be obtained in the room. Price, Ten Dollars. This painting was loaned to Washington Irving, and is engraved in an early edition of his "Knickerbocker History of New York."

# HISTORY AND DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS

OF

## *MIDDLETON'S PORTRAITS*

OF

# MARY, THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON

AND

## MARY PHILLIPSE

647

1884

(WASHINGTON'S EARLY LOVE)

*ALSO, OF THE SHARPLES PORTRAITS*

OF

WASHINGTON, AND MARTHA, HIS WIFE

ROBERT FULTON AND HIS WIFE

AND OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD.

Washingtoniana

James Walker

"

Persons desirous of being on the roll of subscribers to the Autotypes and Photogravures of the Washingtons and Fultons should immediately subscribe, as the roll is rapidly filling up. Beyond the prescribed limit of 500 of each none will be produced. The value of these reproductions must increase.

The public is respectfully informed that the paintings will in no instance be allowed to remain beyond the announced fixed date in any of the great cities arranged for their visit.

Intending visitors will kindly avail of earliest opportunity, and impress same on friends.

BOSTON

FRANK WOOD, PRINTER, 352 WASHINGTON STREET

1886

E 312  
43  
W23

31

THE small collection of portraits, painted in oils, subject of this descriptive Catalogue, has been truthfully characterized by the leading journals as the most important and interesting ever submitted to the view of the American people.

It comprises the only existing delineation of

MARY, THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON,

Styled in sober truth, by her immortal son, as

“THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN HE HAD EVER BEHELD.”

So, also, among these national works, are portraits of America's Great Engineer—ROBERT FULTON—and his lovely wife, niece of Chancellor Livingston, and the

Portrait of MARY PHILLIPSE, “Washington's Early Love.”  
All of which have like unique merit of rarity.

The collection comprises altogether fifteen portraits:—

1. Mary, the Mother of Washington, by Middleton.
2. Mary Phillipse, by Middleton.
3. Profile portrait of Washington, by Sharples.
4. Full-face portrait of Washington, by Sharples.
5. Martha, Wife of Washington, by Sharples.
6. Priestley, the Philosopher and Divine, by Sharples.
7. Chief Justice Marshall, by Sharples.
8. The Wife of General Hamilton, née Schuyler, by Sharples.
9. Mrs. Van Rensselaer, by Sharples.
10. Patrick Henry's daughter, by Sharples.
11. Miss Field, by Sharples.
12. Miss Jay, by Sharples.
13. Robert Fulton, by Sharples.
14. Robert Fulton, his wife, née Livingston, by Sharples.
15. Angelica Peale, daughter of the Artist, and who placed the laurel wreath on Washington's head on his entry into New York to assume the Presidential office, by Sharples.

Each of the above-named women possessed great personal charms, rendering them agreeable subjects to the artists who

handed them down to posterity. Included with these is the celebrated painting in oils of Peter Stuyvesant's "Renowned Army Entering New York;" so graphically described by Washington Irving in his *Knickerbocker History*.

The descriptive details given of the history of all the paintings are taken from a work published by Scribner's Sons, of New York, entitled, "Memorials of Washington, and of Mary his Mother, and Martha his Wife, from letters and papers of Robert Cary and James Sharples, by James Walter, retired major 4th Lancashire Artillery (British Army List)."

Attention is at first naturally riveted to the Grand Presentation of

MARY, THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON,

and which, though a century and a half of years have rolled by since the glorious picture was painted by Captain Middleton (an officer of the British Army attached to the colonial force detailed for service, who had studied under the most eminent artists of his time, and had practiced professionally in portraiture), stands out in all its simple grandeur and beauty, and, thanks to English protective care, as fresh as though it had left the easel but yesterday.

It can truthfully be said that Middleton's portrait of Mary Washington, consequent on its entirely unique character, apart from her great beauty, is beyond any money value; it stands alone as of an interest and importance second to no other painting in the world.

It has been generally believed that no portrait of Washington's mother existed. The error is removed. Washington possessed such a portrait, and for which Americans may be profoundly grateful.

Mary was *enceinte* at the time of the execution of this, the only portrait for which she ever sat. George came into the world four months after the completion of Middleton's lovely picture.

How wide are the sympathies evoked where the trail of greatness is in the pathway! The mother of such a man as Washington must ever be an object of eager interest. The dark shadow of the grave, though enfolding her remains in its unbroken silence, has happily been prevented hiding from succeeding generations the features of her to whom the world owes so much.

The painting was terribly mutilated during a journey to head-

quarters in Philadelphia, being reduced to such a condition as to prevent its being hung in any but a bed-chamber. Sharples, when at Mount Vernon painting the great chief and his wife, was consulted as to what could be done with it. A huge hole had been ground out of its center, through abrasion of the posts of a bedstead carelessly placed in the wagon with the portrait, and its condition during many years was most woe-be-gone. Several partially disjointed pieces of the canvas had been roughly glued on an improvised back, and, although by this rude contrivance its more serious injuries were concealed, yet it was not presentable for mural decoration. Like a truly affectionate son, Washington ever retained it, worried and tattered as it was, in his bedroom, where it remained until sent to England — whether to Mr. Cary in Sharples' charge, when he returned after his first visit to America, is not known; but certain it is that Sharples and Cary were both concerned, not only in the means taken for its repair, but they went a step further, and after the paint had been transferred to a new canvas, its restoration, or, as termed in the memoranda, its "doing up," was confided to one of the ablest artists in portraiture then living, named Bird, who was a Royal Academician and portrait-painter to the Princess Charlotte. Whether Sharples was alive and personally consulted Bird is not known. Sharples himself knew Bird, who appears to have been a personal friend of Robert Cary, Washington's agent, the man to whom America is indebted for the portraits of Washington and his wife.

"Oh! that those lips had language. Life has passed  
 With me but roughly since I heard thee last.  
 Those lips are thine — thy own sweet smile I see,  
 The same that oft in childhood solaced me:  
 Voice only fails, eke how distinct they say,  
 'Grieve not, my child; chase all thy fears away!'  
 The meek intelligence of those dear eyes  
 (Blest be the art that can immortalize —  
 The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim  
 To quench it) here shines on me still the same." — *Couper.*

#### WASHINGTON ON HIS MOTHER'S PORTRAIT.

All doubt as to the portrait of Mary, Washington's mother, is prevented by a letter from Mount Vernon, bearing date 1792, several years before Sharples painted there, and which is addressed to Mr. Charles Carter, who married a niece of Washington. It is a communication in reply to one evidently on private

matters. He had offered his services in getting the painting repaired, and which Washington declined. Washington's yearning to his mother's portrait evidences endearment and devoted affection. Mr. Carter would appear to have asked for an appointment in the War Office; failing this, an army commission for his son, and that he should be admitted as a resident member in the General's family. The General explains his utter inability to accede, and in his usual straightforward language explains his mode of dealing with such applications. As applicable to his mother's portrait, it is reproduced.

“MOUNT VERNON, May 19, 1792.

“MY DEAR SIR: Your letter of the 30th ult. was on its way to Philadelphia while I was on my journey to this place, owing to which I did not receive it until reverberated; this must be my apology for not giving the receipt of it an earlier acknowledgment.

“It is very good of you to offer to get the presumed needful done to my mother's portrait, painted by an Englishman named Middleton, who formerly had a commission in the British service, and who had been a professional artist in England. Robert Cary has frequently urged its being sent to London, that he might confide the repair of the hole and the completion of the picture itself—which, but for the face, is by most persons deemed imperfect—to one of the most eminent English painters; but I have been so long accustomed to look on the mutilation as almost to disregard it. The portrait is identified with my whole life. My mother gave it me, and the large hole was thrust through it in course of wagon travel to Philadelphia quarters. Under the disfigurement, Mrs. Washington and myself preferred it hanging in my bedroom, where its wounded, unfinished, and apparently neglected condition escapes frequent unpleasant remark. Any change wrought in the picture, beyond repairing the hole, would be the reverse of improvement to my eye. I am happy above measure in having it, wounded and apparently neglected as it is, rather than incur the penalty of its absence.

“It would give me pleasure to receive your son into my family if it could be made tolerably convenient to me, or if any advantage was likely to result from it to the young gentleman himself. I was in no real want even of Howell Lewis, but understanding that he was spending his time rather idly, and at the same time very slenderly provided for by his father, I thought for the few months which remained to be accomplished of my own servitude,

by taking him under my care I might impress him with ideas and give him a turn to some pursuit or other that might be serviceable to him hereafter; but what that will be I am at present as much at loss to decide as you would be; for, as the heads of the different departments have by law the appointment of their own clerks—are responsible for the conduct of them—are surrounded always with applicants, and, I presume, have their own inclinations and friends to gratify—I never have in a single instance, and I am pretty sure I shall not begin now, recommended anyone to either of them.

“ My family, now Howell is admitted into it, will be more than full, and in truth more than is convenient for the house—as Mr. Dandridge, a nephew of Mrs. Washington, is already one of it, and but one room for him, Howell, and another person to sleep in; all the others being appropriated to public or private uses (the words ‘purposes, although it is one of the largest houses in the city,’ followed here, but had been marked through by the General’s pen).

“ If your son Charles is of age, and it should be your and his own inclination to pursue a military course, I would, if any vacancy should happen (at present there is none) in one of the regiments, endeavor to place him therein. You will perceive I have made age the condition—the reason is, it is established as a rule in the War Office to appoint none ~~knowingly~~ that are under it.

With love to Mrs. Carter,  
Faithfully yours,

GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

“CHARLES CARTER.”

LORD LYNDHURST, LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF  
ENGLAND, HER PORTRAIT’S GUARDIAN  
AND SPONSOR.

The interest evinced in these portraits by the late Lord Lyndhurst was the first moving cause of their being brought into prominence. Closely on their arrival in England, his lordship stated they would unquestionably be adopted as the typical portraits of the Washingtons. The pictures would probably have dropped out of knowledge at Robert Cary’s death, but for his admonitions. Lord Lyndhurst was an American citizen by birth, who through vast abilities raised himself to the dignity of Chancellor of England. His father, John Singleton Copley,

was born in Boston, in 1738, and went to England in 1776, where he knew Sharpes. Copley was self-educated, and before leaving for England painted Washington.

Copley acquired fame, and was elected a member of the Royal Academy. Lord Lyndhurst was in the habit of buying up portraits executed by his father. Through his father and Romney he knew Sharpes and his portraits of the Washingtons well. Robert Cary apprised him of the arrival of the tattered fragments of Middleton's Mary Washington, and that "Bird had them in hand." He went to see the "wreck," and took interest in the restoration. Lord Lyndhurst continually visited at Cary's, bringing American friends to see the portraits. He always asserted that Middleton's presentment of Mary made her "the grandest and most lovely woman I ever looked upon," and that "every lineament of Washington's countenance is seen and traced in that of his mother." He remarked to Robert Cary, "I know no other such instance." Lyndhurst was the greatest orator in the House of Peers, and held his mighty powers until past ninety years of age. When he brought Daniel Webster—a fellow majestic intellect—to see these portraits, he observed, "Mr. Cary has done more for America than any other man, in having been the means of securing to the world these portraits." On a later occasion, when Mary's portrait was with the others loaned to his lordship for the gratification of some American friends dining with him, he observed, "Americans will some day come by tens of thousands to look on that portrait of the most beautiful of all women."

Nothing has been traced among Mr. Cary's letters or memoranda showing when or through whom the portrait of Mary Washington was sent to England for the necessary repair. Mrs. Sharpes clearly had it in possession after her husband's death, and would appear to have held it for several years later. There would seem to have been a great deal done to it, according to a communication made by her to Mrs. Morgan, of Albany, to whom the widow had written, stating that she had twice addressed Mr. Custis, son of Lady Washington, on the matter, but had not received any reply. However wrecked its condition before voyaging to England, it is now the portrait of a very beautiful woman, and reflects the highest credit on Bird's restoration. True were Washington's words to Sharpes as to his mother being the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. It would be sad to know that after Washington and his wife's death there should have been wanting, in those of his family left behind, heed for the portrait of his mother to which he had

clung with such fond affection. It certainly does seem that, with its disappearance from Mount Vernon, the poor maimed heirloom had ceased having any reverent guardian. This points to the conclusion that it had left there some time before his death.

All that is known is that the tattered picture was transferred to a new canvas, and that when this had been accomplished, it was placed in the hands of Bird, a Royal Academician, for him, as is presumed, to deal with as he deemed best. Bird was an eminent man, and we may be assured dealt with it in every way that was best calculated to render it what friends would desire it to be. He had instructions to do all that could be done in improving the picture, every care being taken to preserve the likeness. The portrait as it came off Bird's easel was doubtless in every way greatly improved. It is now unmistakably the work of a good painter, although a skilled examiner may say that more than one person had a hand in it. It is not an Opei or a Romney, but is, nevertheless, a thoroughly able work, and the whole world has cause of rejoicing that it fell into Bird's hands, and that a man of the sound judgment and discretion of Robert Cary had the selection of the artist to whom such a treasure should be entrusted.

The feeling of the cultured community in regard to the peerless treasure was thus eloquently expressed by E. H. Clements, chief editor of the *Boston Transcript*, in its editorial columns on 3d November:—

“THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON! Breathes there an American—or Englishman either, for that matter—who can stand before the lovely picture, which is certified beyond cavil as having been painted, or rather finished, about three weeks before George Washington was born—a canvas which Washington so adored as the true and loved image of his mother that he always kept it near him—without sensations of mingled awe, joy and triumphant affection? The resemblance is unmistakable; not only in feature, but in traits of a deeper nature, and especially in the air of high-bred dignity sustained by solid character, and of gentle sweetness still not unconscious of power to command and control. This was the mother of Washington, indeed!”

Sharpes' widow, in the first instance, paid the costs of the restoration, though from the painting being afterward found in Mr. Cary's possession, it would appear that he, as Washington's friend, had *recouped* her. There is nothing to show that

the Custis family ever made any application for the portrait to be returned to America, neither is there any evidence that Cary troubled himself about the money or sought to quit himself of the imposed possession. At the time of Sharples' return to America, the portrait of Washington's mother was left behind, and nothing more regarding it was traceable in any after communications. Mr. Cary re-imbursed Mrs. Sharples her payment to Bird, and the picture seems never afterward to have been claimed.

It would appear clear, that but for Mrs. Sharples and Robert Cary, it might have shared the sad fate of thousands of other family portraits, in being carted away to a broker's shop as an article of mural furnishing. Even as such, Mary Washington would have held her own; she is, and ever will be, a beautiful woman.

#### GENERAL GRANT SEES THE PORTRAIT OF MARY.

During his last visit to England, General Grant saw the portrait of Washington's mother. Miss Edwardes, the owner, grand-niece of the Carys, having had his wish intimated to her, very graciously sent it to London, in order that he might be gratified without making special journey into Northamptonshire. Grant thus feelingly acknowledged her kind attention:

"General Grant presents his respectful compliments to Miss Edwardes, the envied owner of the Middleton painting of Mary Washington, and begs to tender her his hearty thanks for exceeding kindness in sending to London, for his convenience and gratification, this admirable and evidently 'to the life' portrait of Mary Washington, who, above all others, must be held in deepest affection and exalted remembrance by every American.

"When mentioning at the Legation his desire to see the portrait, he had no wish, much less any intention, to put Miss Edwardes to the trouble of sending the treasure so long a distance, he therefore esteems more highly the honor conferred. He had seen the two portraits of General Washington, and that of Martha, his wife, by Sharples, owned by Mr. Robert Cary, who, he now learns, was great-uncle of Miss Edwardes. He fully realizes all that his countrymen have said regarding the excellence of these fine paintings, and their value, not alone to the people among whom should be their home, but to the whole world.

"Of the many kindnesses shown him by friends in England, none is more deeply impressed. He has not removed the paint-

ing from the case, and has returned it in charge of a special messenger from the Legation. All endeavors to see Sharpes' portrait of Robert Fulton, or to ascertain its owner, have been ineffectual. Should Miss Edwardes be enabled to help this object, his obligations would be further increased.

"Whenever the day arrives for the return of these paintings to America, Congress will, he doubts not, unanimously do its duty in the matter. The painting of Mary Washington has especial claims as the only portrait of her known to exist. General Grant had hoped that Middleton's portrait was free for disposition; he hears, therefore, with regret that family arrangements prevent, for a few years, this desired accomplishment.

"General Grant begs to repeat his becoming sense of the honor done him, as also to express his entire confidence that at the proper time Miss Edwardes' family will give due weight to his countrymen's natural wish to possess the gem, happily for America, under her family control."

#### EMERSON AND THE PORTRAITS.

On the occasion of Emerson's last voyage to England, when visiting with his daughter in the family of Mr. Flower, at Stratford-on-Avon, he was very desirous of seeing the portrait of Washington's mother, by Middleton. All efforts to trace it then proved unavailing, though had application been made at the American Legation, the place of all others seeming most likely to give the desired whereabouts, the mystery would have been solved. In order for a correct understanding of the past and present state of the holding of the various Sharpes Washington portraits, it is best to explain that, some time after the death of Robert Cary, the three portraits passed out of his brother's hands; so, also, the painting of Washington's mother changed hands, and they were for a short period dispersed. Their value to America caused their after purchase by one family, and, with the exception of the Mary, they have never since been separated. The portrait of Washington's mother ran great risk in being for a short time under divided family holding. It is, however, now controlled by the same family as the other pictures, although for a period of years Mary Washington's portrait was separated from the others. The blessed mother, subject of her son's deep anxiety for so many years, got spirited away to the neighborhood of Northampton, where she rested peacefully for some ten years; next for the honor of extending hospitality to her was the city of Bath, where for a

short time she dwelt in obscurity, since which she has found a quiet, appreciative home in Sussex. A few years prior to Mr Cary's death, these paintings, second in historic value to no other portraits in the world, came near a rude scatter, and would probably have been irretrievably lost, the younger Cary, the inheritor, being entirely ignorant of his elder brother's close association with Washington. Through sagacious timely advice of Lord Lyndhurst the family decided not to part with the portraits; each, therefore, took one, the portrait of Mary, by Middleton, falling to Mrs. Edwardes, Robert Cary's sister. Good advisers, conscious of their ultimate value, have since been always ready with best counsel, though there have been days of darkness when the perils of separation seemed imminent.

The occasional unknown whereabouts of the portraits during the last seventy years is easily explained. Nobody having control over them heeded or could serve any object in bringing them into notoriety. For a time they may be said to have had no owners. After this period of doubt and neglect, the whole were with much foresight acquired by one and the same person. There were, however, clauses in a family settlement of the pictures preventing their sale, as also their being engraved, until an interested minor became of age. It was this specific, though as it proved happy, provision that stood in the way of Washington Irving having them engraved for his "Life of Washington." Irving was deeply anxious for this permission. His first application was made in 1854, and was followed up by frequent communications during the succeeding ten years. He tried every means to get over the legal difficulty, but eventually admitted that the hoped permission to engrave the portraits could not be given.

Emerson, the great Essayist, thus wrote of these portraits:—

"I would have willingly crossed the Atlantic, if only to look on these portraits, so priceless to our people. Future ages will glory in their existence. There are those who assert that 'veneration' is quitting in our national character, fickleness taking its place. If so, it is difficult of explanation, save through the frequent changes of government. Of this we may be certain, that whatever occasional aberrations may be manifested, the loyal and good of our people will never swerve in their devotion to him who must ever be the corner-stone of our fabric, and whose star will burn more and more resplendent as ages develop.

"It has not fallen to my lot to get a look at the portrait of Washington's mother, and which I believe is a fine picture. I

had always been under the belief that it was painted by Sharples, and owned by the same family as possess the portraits of our first President and his wife. Such is not the case. The portrait of the mother of Washington, though some eighty years ago owned by the same branch of the Cary family as possessed the Sharples portraits, has since passed away to a younger branch, and I have been unable to trace it. There is, however, no doubt as to its existence. Many of our people who know the owning family get access to its abode, which I hear is in Northamptonshire. Washington's mother's portrait, painted by an English officer named Middleton, must not be mixed up with the American female beauties outlined by Sharples, and, so far as four or five are concerned, finished by the eminent English painter Mac-lise, and which are in the family here owning the Sharples Washington portraits.

“These portraits must some day return to us. Well will it be for our women to see and know Martha Washington in the faithfulness she is rendered by Sharples, to realize that housewifery is a great duty, and that in her day it was deemed as creditable for women to spin and weave as it was in the days of King Solomon, who in the Book of Proverbs describes an honorable woman: ‘She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.’ Or in the days of Homer, made the use of the distaff and loom the employment of royal women:—

“‘Alcandra, consort of his high command,  
A golden distaff gave to Helen’s hand;  
And that rich vase, with living sculpture wrought,  
Which, heaped with wool, the beauteous Philo brought.  
The silken fleece, impurpled for the loom,  
Recalled the hyacinth in vernal bloom.’”

#### DANIEL WEBSTER ON THE PORTRAITS.

No higher homage can be rendered these paintings than that bestowed by the statesman whose greatness is so interwoven with the nation’s dignity, that the occasion of his death seemed as if some grand governing member of a system was stricken from its orbit. Speaking at a public dinner in England, in 1839, Daniel Webster said:—

“It has been my privilege to visit a peaceful home where lives in canvas delineation the man whose purity and greatness must fill the universe until the world shall be no more. Washington is there—and to the life—through the power of the painter Sharples.”

ROBERT CARY, THE ORIGINAL OWNER OF THE  
SHARPLES PORTRAITS.

Robert Cary, from whom all the portraits forming this priceless collection appear to have come down to his descendants of the present time, was a highly esteemed merchant of London. Through a long series of years, and until his death, he held more than intimate intercourse with Washington. He was a most devoted adherent and rendered loyal service to the Great Chief on many occasions in Europe, when wily enemies endeavored to undermine him. He is known to have been intrusted with the management of important and most delicate political matters, and to have been the medium of intercourse between Washington, Burke, and Lord Erskine during momentous times. John Jay, when Minister to England, was almost a daily visitor to Cary, whose devotion to the Great Patriot will some day form a theme for the world's admiration.

From knowledge of Washington's nobility of character, and great services to his country, and through confidential relations, he had personally become greatly endeared to Robert Cary; so much so that "I greatly covet the illustrious general, my loved friend's portrait, by a competent painter who shall do justice to the noble subject." So wrote Cary at the time. His whole heart, as his purse, was in the matter, and we accordingly find Sharples sent over the seas to compass his yearning; "having satisfied myself," as he added, "by several interviews with my friend, George Romney, that Mr. Sharples, whom he recommends for the purpose, will produce such a work as will meet my wish, and be worthy of the greatest of all men."

Romney had become advanced in years, Sharples was his pupil, and we may be assured he would select one he deemed best as an artist to do justice to the subject; Washington being then the admired of the whole world, and Robert Cary an old friend he was desirous to serve. Romney came out of Lancashire, so did Sharples; there were thus birth ties as well as professional associations between the master and his disciple; and although there is nothing to show that the latter was a man of great note among artists, yet it must be borne in mind "there were giants in those days" in England's portrait world, and no pretense is made that Sharples ranked among them. To have sent out either of the stars then shining in portraiture, who would have needed at least eight months' absence—seven and

eight weeks being in those days no uncommon length of the voyage either way—was out of the question; for, although Millais' two thousand guineas fee for a single head had not yet cropped up, yet very respectable prices were earned; Sharples himself, as a junior unblessed by fame, charging fifty guineas, and getting it—this at a time when men of means were few and far between. His passage outward was paid, and even on his first visit he walked on shore in anything but an impecunious condition, as his wife states that he, on landing, went and made a deposit of over two hundred pounds in a New York bank, as a nest-egg. It is by no means certain that this comfortable start was to his advantage. Instead of setting to work, and knocking off his commissions, he would appear to have taken things easy. There remains nothing to show the precise date at which he commenced or finished his two portraits of Washington, one a full-face in military uniform, the other a profile, and one of Martha, Washington's wife, a profile.

All that is certain regarding his work at the time, is that the portraits reached England during 1797. Three years and more had thus expired in the interval of his landing and the pictures arrival. There was no holding on to them for exhibition purposes after their completion. Washington and his wife each gave their first sittings at Mount Vernon; the General afterward gave him two final sittings in Philadelphia, but Lady Washington sat to him only at Mount Vernon. The portrait of Martha was a present from her to Mr. Cary, and the profile was a gift from Washington. The full-face is the portrait commissioned by Mr. Cary, and for the production of which Sharples came out to America. All three pictures were taken to New York, and finished there by Sharples in his own house in Greenwich Street, and were at once sent off to England. Mrs. Sharples, in a letter to Mr. Cary, dwells on the advantage her husband would have derived from an exhibition of the portraits, and which she said had been "seen by nobody but General Hamilton, Governor Morris, General North, Mr. Van Rensselaer, De Witt Clinton, Chief Justice Marshall, Judge Hobart, the Barclays, Chancellor Livingston, Judge Kent, the Jays, and intimate friends of the family visiting at Mount Vernon; whereas, if we could have been permitted the opportunity to exhibit them in Philadelphia, and here in New York, it would have benefited my husband greatly."

The portraits have, through unbroken continuity, been since generally known of, and seen by, such public men of America as, through occasions of going to England, were enabled to avail

themselves of such to visit Mr. Cary, who up to the time of his death always felt a pleasure in showing the three portraits to any persons desirous, as he was wont to term it, of "paying court to my distinguished guests." Use of the word "guest" would indicate some design on his part to be the instrument of their return to America; and yet he possibly felt that he could hardly present that which had been given to himself. Cary was a bachelor, full of chivalry, and there was nobody to inherit these heirlooms excepting a younger unmarried brother and one sister. She had become Mrs. Edwardes, and will be seen to hold a trust of deep interest to every American heart, inasmuch as it fell to her lot to inherit the priceless treasure, the portrait of Mary, mother of George Washington, painted by an artist named Middleton. At her death the painting passed into the possession of her unmarried daughter, Eleanor Edwardes.

The origin and growth of the more than friendship between Cary and Washington has been shown; how, when Washington was serving as an English officer, Cary became his agent in London, his firm holding, from many officers and their families, commissions of like kind. It is in no way strange that, out of business transactions of mutual dependence, friendships sprang up between the parties, having the ultimate effect of merging the mere mercantile agency duties with ties of closest family association and confidence. Sharing the lot of other illustrious men, the world's great patriot had secret enemies, puny as they were. Cary, as the friend of Burke, and enjoying the confidence of public men in Europe, laid bare their machinations.

Old Custom House records show that Cary & Co. received produce from over twenty families, many of them English officers who had relinquished their military callings, and in numerous instances had laid hold of the plough instead.

Others had adopted mercantile pursuits, as in the case of Barclay & Co., of New York, one of the oldest firms thus originally springing out of soldier origin. Mr. Barclay had held an officer's commission, and at the time there was quite a number of gentlemen sitting at the desk in "counting-houses" — offices had not then obtained admission into the vernacular of New York,—and who, from varying causes, and under specially occurring opportunities, had with honor melted down their swords. The English War Office regulations did not then allow any donning of military uniform at the bidding good-bye to the service. There could be no dressing up with gold lace, or "buckling of a rapier," after the relinquishment fiat had gone forth. Soldiering meant fighting with designated instruments of warfare, not with the

goose-quill. In New Orleans there were half-a-dozen "old soldier firms," as they were characteristically nicknamed, and in Charleston several. Richmond, in Virginia, boasted of several of the new order; and it is an evidence of Washington's steadfastness of character and adherence to uninterrupted friendship, that through life he stuck to Cary & Co., in London, and to Barclay & Co., of New York; the one for the conversion of his tobaccoos into hard dollars, and their due and safe transmission to his clutch, the latter for their transport over the seas in "good and safe bottoms."

Good Robert Cary was one of the old-fashioned type. He managed all correspondence with clients in America in proper form and good style, and never huckstered in the matter of commissions. Copying-books had not in those days been evoluted. Fine thick water-lined laid foolscap was the medium of communication. None of your miserable modern paper from straw, but manufactured of linen rags and none other; free of slippery gloss, tempting the pen into tautologous meandering; each sheet bearing the maker's "water-mark" duly recorded thereon, as evidence of its worth in durability and toughness. "Whatman & Co.," of Kentish renown, led the van of "true foolscap." Robert Cary & Co., and their ilk, would have no other, and each recurring spring, as a good ship was "entered out" for New York, a ream of this coveted papyrus was sent to Colonel Washington, with a supply of quill-pens, and two pounds of sealing-wax of no other brand than Walkden & Co. Ink, too, there went, of famed fabricate, and three bundles of pink tape wherewith to tie the Colonel's bundles of documents. The list shows that a packet of "pounce" was included in the annual requirement. It will puzzle hurried men of to-day to translate "pounce." It was an article of finely granulated sand, for dusting on manuscript to prevent blotting: blotting-paper had not then sprung into life, and the head of the new nation was a man of almost unique care and neatness in all appertaining to his calligraphy. Robert Cary, to supply such wants, did not go into the next street to a stationer's shop; he opened direct communication with this notable J. Whatman, who, after specifying the weight per ream, sent it "up to London" by the weekly carrier.

But there were divers other things to be assembled for these annually recurring shipments. Home gastronomic comforts had to be thought of. Like Meg and Trotty Veck in Dickens' goblin story of "The Chimes," the General has a penchant for tripe. So important was the delicacy in his Lady Washington's eyes, that Robert Cary was specially charged to ship him on one

occasion no less a bulk than four huge earthen vessels, each of which is ordered to be "wicker-bound," and recased in a cask, to guard against fracture and spilling the precious contents. Cary, it is seen from Washington's warm acknowledgment, had been in the habit of sending him presents of the coveted Bristol pickled article. Two such jars had recently made safe travel to Mount Vernon, and, as the Duke of Wellington would have done in like position of long distance from the provisioning base, the wary warrior looked ahead, backed by an admission, made in explanation of the large consumption, that his molars were out of gear, three other such jars are requisitioned. The taste for pickled tripe of Bristol cure had been introduced from the West India Islands into New Orleans and other places. Quite a commerce had grown up in it, and among the sugar planters it was a standing dish. The largest stone jars held about two gallons; there was a special pottery at Bristol for their make, and each jar had the curer's name burnt in on the frontal, in order to make sure of the contents being genuine. There were several favorite brands largely consumed in the West Indies; that of "Hamlin," brought to Barbadoes by the ships of Thomas Daniel & Sons, was the quality and brand preferred of Washington. Gradually, as there arose a fondness for this tripe, direct imports occurred, and other English tripe-makers tried their hands; but for a century or more "Bristol tripe" held its way against all comers and home fabricators. New York and Massachusetts men went into the curing, but the over-sea article defied them until cruel customs duties stepped in and ruthlessly swept away the monopoly.

#### WASHINGTON ON THE PORTRAITS.

The following highly characteristic letter of Washington, thanking his friend for a present of two huge jars of tripe, ordering, as matter of business, a further supply of the succulent dainty, declining, on behalf of his wife and himself, any meddling with duplicates of his or her portraits, and expressing their united opinions that the Sharpes portraits are the best ever executed, is of deepest interest:—

"DEAR CARY: Mrs. Washington joins me in warm thanks to you for your considerate present of two large jars of pickled tripe, which reached Mount Vernon in perfect condition. I must ask you to arrange for four similar jars in wicker-basket casing, packed in outer cask, to be shipped for my account direct from the curers in Bristol early in the season, when a vessel will be

leaving that port for New York. If consigned to Messrs. Barclay, those gentlemen will give the little matter their unvarying care. Dental infirmity impels my caring for this necessary item in our domestic commissariat.

"I have been solicited by Colonel Trumbull and others to request your permission for Mr. Sharples to execute copies in oils, size of the originals, of the two portraits of myself and that of Mrs. Washington, and to name that if Mr. Sharples thinks of returning to this country, a good opportunity would thus be found to bring them out. I cannot encourage any hope of commissions for expensive portraits in oils, such as these were. Our people cannot afford to pay the price. I shall ever value highly the friendship prompting the great outlay on your part.

"It is agreed on all hands that his two portraits of myself are, so far as likeness goes, by far the best of the many made; hence the desire that the copies should be from the hand of the artist himself who painted the originals. In the instances of his frequent small pastel reproductions there is great inferiority. The copies I gave Judge Marshall are, perhaps, the best, but all are said to be very weak. My wife declines to join in asking your consent—I have undertaken simply to name it;—to go beyond the mention would, it seems to me, be a clear impertinence.

"In judging Mrs. Washington's seeming disinclination, it should be remembered that my having sat to Stuart has resulted in the country abounding in so-called 'originals.'

"If it be your wish for the desired copies to be made, Mr. Sharples should be required to enter into an undertaking they shall be painted in best manner of his capability; and in your interest he should be strictly confined to the execution of one copy only of each, and bound not to paint more; so also he should undertake not to remove the pictures from your residence.

Faithfully yours,

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

"To ROBERT CARY, Esq., Merchant in London."

A very general opinion has always existed that the First President did not personally favor the having copies of the Cary portraits made, and a good deal of remark, not always favorable to Lady Washington, has been vented, charging her with being opposed to the country getting permission for the execution of copies. All this is pretty much set at rest by the publication of the letter from the General, which, though treating of private family matters, conclusively shows that he would have nothing whatever to do in it beyond laying the request before Mr. Cary.

Lady Washington is made to avow her refusal to join in the request; she evidently desired that the English portraits should be real, and that no tricks should be played with them. The artist had been, in her estimate, liberally paid for his work, it had given satisfaction, and there should be an end of it. No blame can reasonably attach to her in the business. She doubtless had even stronger views on the matter than her husband. Stuart and others had been multiplying their presentments of her husband whenever the opportunity offered from a good-paying customer. Nothing may have been said as to actual "originality," but the inference conveyed with each such at time of sale was, that the General sat for it; in other words, that they were painted from the life, whereas only one of Stuart's many productions was original in the true sense. Martha stepped in here to hedge round and protect the Sharples portraits. She really wished that real worth should attach to them, and that they should be handed down to posterity unduplicated, and England for awhile would be their safest home.

It was during a first stay in Philadelphia that Sharples' letter from the English Secretary of State, introducing him to Washington, was formally presented through the resident Minister, Mr. Hammond. There could not have been any need of this formality, as Mr. Cary's letter to Washington was more than sufficient to obtain the desired object. In common, however, with the routine style of the old merchant of those days, Mr. Cary did everything *en règle*; hence the formal document as advance-guard. No time was lost in Sharples' being honored with access to the illustrious chief, the object of his mission. The General did not formally wait the painter's appearing at Mount Vernon; he very considerately sought him out in Philadelphia, and expressed much gratification at his being domiciled in the house of "my friend, Mr. Franklin." He and Franklin were honored by dining with "His Excellency" the following day, in the quarters he retained for occupation on occasion of his visits to Philadelphia, which were not infrequent. At this family party, arrangements were made for his visits to Mount Vernon. As proof of Washington's liberality, and the nice delicacy prompting and attending his carrying out such acts, when Sharples came to settle with Franklin for a month's board—and it included that of his wife and two children, for a like period—he was, in tones of whisper, informed that "everything has been settled by the General." The intimation was accompanied with hints advising calm submission, and with assurance that the liberal allowance of port wine had been included in the score, not omitting

sundry bottles of archaic whiskey. Sharples' noble portrait of Priestley was a product of like happy circumstances, attending the perpetuation of the godlike lineaments of Washington. But for Cary and Benjamin Franklin, the world would have been without either.

#### TRUMBULL AND SHARPLES GREAT FRIENDS.—LETTER FROM TRUMBULL REGARDING THE PORTRAITS OF WASHINGTON.

Benjamin West's home in London was a home to Sharples, Fulton, and Trumbull. All were friends, and when in London, were in habit of continually meeting here, as they also did at Robert Cary's residence. It would appear that Trumbull first saw the portraits as finished works in London, and at once concluded how desirable it was that Sharples should execute copies for America, and thus urgently pressed him in the following letter to Mrs. Sharples, found among her papers at her decease. The artist's wife is selected as a medium of communication, being deemed more likely of successful intercession with Mr. Cary, Mrs. Washington being adverse to the suit.

In his earnest anxiety that America should possess copies of the Washington portraits executed by the artist himself, Trumbull addressed the following imploring letter to Mrs. Sharples urging her to use influence with Mr. Cary. Sharples and his wife were at the time in England, having returned thither after executing the portraits. It will readily be seen that Martha Washington was the obstruction to any copies being made.

“It is much to be hoped you will induce Mr. Cary to change his determination, so as to allow your husband to duplicate his portraits of the General and Mrs. Washington. The small pastels are but poor ideas of the original oils, and we are unable to see why Mr. Cary should have permitted their reproduction after this manner, and yet disallow the original oils, which all here remember with such satisfaction. It is a pity consent had not been given before the three portraits left for England. Mrs. Washington, as you know, was really the cause of the difficulty; why she raised it is passing strange. Had she solicited Mr. Cary he would have felt flattered. Her reply to all endeavors of inducement was, that it would lessen the value of the portraits in Mr. Cary's estimate. All blame her. Many will never forgive her desire for English exclusive possession. Martha's blue blood often crops out.

"Mr. Sharples is aware I was in Europe when his oils of the Washingtons were finished. I saw them first in company with the Hon. John Jay at Mr. Cary's, in London. It was a revelation to us both I shall never forget, they being his first canvas work seen by me. We both told Mr. Cary of their national import, but dared not then intimate to him the importance of duplicates being painted for America. The matter of Sharples' charge need not be considered. Mr. Jay is ready with the cost, to which several more are willing to join. Even if you had made a special return visit to America—and I trust you will return—there would have been no chance of getting the General to go through any sitting ordeal repetition, so we are quite satisfied to put up with duplicates, and trust Mr. Cary will loan him the pictures for the purpose. The General, after so numerous occasions of torment by artists, many of them utterly unworthy of the great subject, and incapable of appreciating the honor conferred, became a most unwilling sitter, and vowed to Gilbert Stuart he would never again go through the penance process. His portrait is much admired, but to my eye it is not the General; and I regret to say he is making numerous others, for none of which the General accorded a sitting. We must not, however, be hard on Stuart; the inducement is such as few of us could withstand. The General felt in durance with Stuart, who told me he knew not what to say or do to get the desired expression; and if he had, the chances are that nervousness would have prevented him seizing it. Only fancy using a model to get Washington's majesty of form; and yet this was resorted to, although none approaching him could be found. The General admitted to Stuart that 'although your husband had been accorded many long sittings, and that he yielded to sit for two portraits, although only one had been arranged for, yet the occasions had been rendered convenient,' and that 'Sharples' rapidity of work and master-hand had interested him throughout.' He added; 'Sharples had the advantage of entertaining me with amusing newly-imported anecdotes of public men in England, and especially of the King, so that I never felt his sittings tedious or encroaching on my time; indeed, I looked forward pleasurable to our daily meetings at Mount Vernon and his interesting conversation kept up during the whole time of work. Sharples was a clever man outside his art occupation, and had some novel ideas on the subject of artillery; at the same time his brain worked with his lips, and he was evidently a good mechanic. He talked well and worked well at the same time,—no common endowments.'

"For myself, I had long despaired of his giving me another sitting. Had such been afforded I should have devoted it to studies for future hoped-for work, rather than any formal portrait. This clear determination toward all artists make us doubly anxious that the country should possess your husband's portraits of him. We cannot get the life-originals, but we may, through Mr. Cary's assent, get the next best thing—copies by the hand that produced them from the life. The country has more than enough so-called 'portraits of Washington,' four fifths of them destitute of the faintest resemblance. Many of those for which he so humanely sat come under this category: the workers were so dazed in his presence they knew not what they were about. How greatly, under these circumstances, all future painters will be thrown back on the Houdon bust—and entirely, as it were—that nothing else carries, and it is certainly remarkable that deftness in clay-modeling has, in Washington's case, achieved that which the brush has yet failed to produce. When Jefferson, in Paris, presented, in 1785, Charles Willson Peale's portrait of Washington to Houdon, and which had been expressly painted for the purpose of conveying to him the form and features of his subject, he at once declined it, and, at great personal sacrifices, came out to Mount Vernon to see the great original himself. Our gratitude to Franklin for having brought him out is great. In looking at the Houdon, how few of our people know the fact that Houdon actually took a cast of the face, and worked out a model of the face from this. So also he eschewed all resort to other forms of men for retaining the majesty of the original. He took the closest measurements of every limb, and, being from the heart impressed with the world's future estimate of the man, has left it a work worthy of the subject and the artist. Had he followed our people's wish we should have had something very secondary. It is no mere individual opinion that the Houdon bust is our best Washington, and I am expressing the feeling of all who have seen your husband's renderings of the great subject, that they are by far the ablest canvas attempts. They are both inspired by lifelike and with individual grandeur and dignity beyond any other representations. They are far away from home, but the day will come for their rule in the world's heart as true presents of Washington.

"The Pine, Stuart, Savage, and Willson Peale portraits, and, as I trust, some of my own humble productions, will be subjects for reference to future generations of artists, for their designed work, illustrative of the military achievements and struggles of

our people's great master-mind in the country's early infancy. But we need more, or future painters will be deficient in realistic work of reference. It is in hope of this supply we turn to Mr. Cary. Sharpes, in being welcomed and quartered at Mt. Vernon, was, out of respect to his sponsor, placed in like position, and had extended to him all the advantages enjoyed by Houdon, Stuart, myself, and others, and we all admit his diligent availing of the great opportunity and privilege. I am thus particular, in order that Mr. Cary may know why duplicates of the Washington portraits are desired by us. Personally I am much interested, as they would afford authentic material to fall back upon for public work I have in contemplation, and there exists little else I could avail myself of with satisfaction. I do not believe the General will ever again sit to any one; it cannot be expected of him. Stuart will hardly produce anything more of real value, and I fear the General will not seek to influence Mr. Cary to give the needed permission. He has promised to name the matter, but we fear he will not go beyond a slight allusion, as any referring to portraits of himself he regards as savoring of vanity, and is most distasteful. Apart from any other feeling, the continued multiplying of copies by men in whom confidence has been reposed has disgusted him, and it is to be feared he looks on the whole fraternity of artists as birds of a feather. Lady Washington does not favor the duplicating of Mr. Cary's portraits; she will discourage rather than help it. Both she and the General desire the existence of authentic portraits that have not been multiplied, and she favors England as their suitable resting-place. Having herself defrayed the cost of her own portrait, she holds to have a voice in the matter. She knows how the President has, throughout his public life, been harassed and bored in sitting for portraits, the great majority of them worthless. One of the Peale family had proved a very vampire on his time, and it says much for his amiability and patience that he so enduringly submitted to tyros palmed upon him by injudicious friends. In so new a country it was not probable artists should have been so soon raised up equal to the great call; we ought, therefore, to have brought out from England a Lawrence or a Gainsborough for this especial emergency. Mr. Cary, in sending Sharpes out, did a great national service, and it is hoped he may see public good in granting the favor sought. I have gone into the matter thus minutely, feeling no one else will take it up on right grounds, and also with the knowledge that Lady Washington will oppose copies of the portraits being made. I address myself to you, knowing Mr. Sharpes will not

urge it with the force needed to induce Mr. Cary's consent; and, being yourself an artist, you will sympathize in our wish to have the duplicates.

Stuart had not painted Washington prior to the time of Sharples' first visit, or he would certainly have seen it, and it would have been referred to by the sitter himself in their many conversations. The only mention of Stuart traceable in papers left by Mrs. Sharples, is Colonel Trumbull's remarks on his portraits, and the annoyance felt both by Washington and his wife that these should have been so indefinitely multiplied, and a letter from General Gates' wife, which contains this remarkable statement:—

“Mrs. Washington, it is well known, does not like Stuart's portrait of her husband; he has made him too fierce, and then the nose is altogether what the artists deem ‘out of drawing;’ the distension of the nostrils, if I may so express it, is most unnatural. Then there is what Mrs. Washington, I hear, calls ‘a sponginess in the nose’ he has given him, and which nobody but the man who painted it ever saw. I do not think the General will ever sit to him again. And why should he endure more sittings? Mrs. Washington does not want any more portraits of him, and will not have any other than your husband's in the house. The subject of sitting for another portrait will never be named to him.”

A wide margin must be given to this evident bit of woman's spite on the part of General Gates' better half. Her husband had proved himself a secret enemy of the great patriot, and had been, more or less, concerned in the plots to undermine the public estimate of his military capacity; nor had he rested here. Letters from him to public men in England and France had been unearthed by Robert Cary, and his more than complicity clearly established. Washington's nobility of heart stayed all exposure of the traitorous hypocrisy, and even went the length of forgiving, if not altogether forgetting it. It was not so with Mr. Cary or Sharples, who, knowing his Judas hypocrisy, ever afterward despised him according to his deserts. Mrs. Gates would speak disparagingly of Stuart's portrait, but she would hardly be the depositary of Martha Washington's feelings in regard to it. The nose, as the mouth, were then, as now, in all probability objective features.

THE PROFILES OF GEORGE AND MARTHA WASHINGTON.

These came out from England in 1886, coupled with the following announcement from the most eminent painters and sculptors:—

“In order for these portraits being exhibited to the American nation in becoming form, the eminent portrait-painters and sculptors whose names are appended (than whom none higher could be cited) speak authoritatively as to the originality and authenticity of these historical works:—

“NEW YORK, April 12, 1882.

“The Sharples portraits of Washington, a full-face picture and a profile, and that of Lady Washington, all three painted in oils, and exhibited for several months in New York during 1882, bear every evidence of having been painted from the life. The full-face portrait was exhibited before the Historical Society of New York in 1854. The authenticity of these paintings has never been questioned by artists or others competent to form correct judgment.

(Signed)

D. HUNTINGTON,

*President of the National Academy of Design.*

EASTMAN JOHNSON.

J. G. A. WARD.

LAUNT THOMPSON.”

THE FULL-FACE PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON.

The full-face portrait, as also the profile and that of Martha were all three commenced in the drawing-room at Mount Vernon, as is presumed, in 1795. It is generally understood the works were finished in Philadelphia, where he resided with the younger Franklin, and where Washington, according to the Sharples memoranda, made frequent visits to him. It was first brought back to America in 1854. Its exhibit before the Historical Society of New York was thus officially recorded in the transactions of that body:—

“HISTORICAL ROOMS,

UNIVERSITY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, April 5, 1854.

“The portrait of Washington, kindly permitted to be exhibited at a meeting of the Historical Society last evening, attracted much attention, and was much admired by the members,

who expressed great satisfaction in being afforded the opportunity of seeing this valuable picture.

“I thought it might be interesting to the possessors of this valuable picture to extract from the minutes the remarks of Mr. Wetmore and the Rev. Dr. Van Pelt in alluding to the portrait.

I am, very respectfully yours,

ANDREW WARNER.”

“At a stated meeting of the New York Historical Society, held in the Chapel of the University of the City of New York, on Tuesday evening, April 4, 1854, Mr. Wetmore called attention to a portrait of Washington hanging over the President’s chair, stating that it possessed intrinsic evidence of being an original painting, and had been pronounced as such by our most distinguished artists, familiar with all the well-known portraits of Washington. It was said to be superior to the world-renowned portrait by Stuart, and that until within a short time all knowledge of the Sharples portraits of Washington in oils was confined to such American tourists to England as carried letters to the owners.

“The venerable Rev. Dr. Van Pelt, who was present at this meeting of the New York Historical Society, said he had in his childhood the good fortune to spend some hours in the society of Washington, and after giving a detail of his appearance, he pronounced the portrait to be an excellent likeness of Washington as he remembered him.

“(Extract from the minutes.)

ANDREW WARNER, *Recording Secretary.*”

The Rev. Dr. Van Pelt recorded as follows:—

“HAMMOND STREET, NEW YORK CITY, April 22, 1854.

“In compliance with request, I have the honor now to transmit my opinion of the portrait of Washington, which was exhibited in our New York Historical Society, at a regular meeting held in the University, on the evening of the 4th of April last.

“It gives me pleasure to state that I had the satisfaction—I would add, the honor and happiness—in my youthful school-going days, after the war of the Revolution, and previous to his inauguration as the first President of the United States, of seeing and spending part of a day in company with General George Washington, justly styled ‘the Great and Good Man.’

“He was indeed eminently so, in the various relations of domestic and public life, as also in his death.

“Taught from my earliest childhood to cherish and estimate highly the patriotism, principles, virtues, and character of Wash-

ington, in common with my countrymen, and having the privilege, I approached near to him, got by the side of him: he putting his arm around my neck, embraced me close to him, and talked to me. Taking the buttons of his military coat between my fingers, and intent in looking at him, I observed distinctly the features of his face—his bland, dignified, majestic countenance; his erect, tall, towering person; his graceful movements and amiable demeanor—so as even at present, in my advanced age, to perpetuate the knowledge, and leave in my mind and memory the impress of the contour of his face, his grave look, and stately appearance. Accordingly, in beholding the portrait as suspended in view of the members of the New York Historical Society, I pronounced it then, as I do now, an interesting picture of our immortal Washington, who, we are pleased to say, was ‘first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen’; and that it is, according to my remembrance, a faithful, excellent, lifelike likeness of the Great Living Original, worthy to be carefully preserved, and highly valued.

With best wishes, respectfully yours,

P. J. VAN PELT, D.D.”

After seeing the portrait, Washington Irving thus wrote of it:

“ SUNNYSIDE, April 13, 1854.

“ I have seen the portrait of Washington by Sharples. There is much more of life and animation than in that by Stuart, but the latter has more calm dignity. I should think it was taken several years previously, probably during the war, when Washington was leading a life of personal activity and mental excitement.

“ The mouth is different from that by Stuart, and approaches more to the natural shape of that taken of him when he was forty years of age, by Peale. A set of artificial teeth, which I believe he did not wear until after the Revolutionary War, altered the shape of his mouth,—drew it down at the corners, and lengthened the upper lip.

“ The Sharples portrait gives a better idea of the innate energy of his character; which, after he laid by the sword and assumed the toga, may have been somewhat veiled by the sober decorums and restraint of official station.

“ I think the portrait a very valuable one, and should like very much to have the privilege of having it engraved for the ‘Life of Washington,’ should I ever complete and publish that work, which the booksellers have so often announced without my au-

thority, and even before the plan of it had been turned in my mind.

I am, dear sir, with high respect,  
Your obliged and humble servant,

WASHINGTON IRVING."

The poet Bryant also bore testimony thus:—

"NEW YORK, April 26, 1854.

"I have seen the picture of Washington by Sharples. It is a fine picture and most interesting, inasmuch as it represents Washington in the vigor of manhood, some years before Stuart's portrait of him was taken. The countenance expresses thought, resolution, sensibility, and a high degree of physical energy.

"I regard the discovery of the picture as an event of great importance.

W. C. BRYANT."

Two years later, Longfellow wrote appreciatively thus:—

"CAMBRIDGE, September 22, 1856.

"I have just returned from a long visit to the seaside, and find your friendly letter and the Sharples portraits (small photos had been sent to Mr. Longfellow), and hasten to thank you for them, and to explain why I have not done so sooner.

"These portraits are very beautiful and very valuable. They are treasures which I highly prize, and which I shall guard with jealous care; and, as you request, will ever respect your interests, and on no pretence allow them to go out of my house.

"If there was an artist here equal to the one who took the copies of the Sharples pictures, you should have one of me in the same style. But, alas! that is not the case, and I shrink from subjecting myself to the process of Daguerre.

With greatest regard, yours, faithfully,

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW."

Efforts were about this time made to purchase this portrait and hold it in America, but a sale could not then be made. The Cary family had been advised to put the portraits in settlement, which tied them up for a time.

Dickens, who had enlisted Maclise to complete the female heads, wrote:—

"I have had much pleasure in securing the good offices of Maclise, though the being successful is more due to Stanfield

than my efforts. Certainly he has made pictures out of Sharples' sketches of American women of Washington's time remarkable for their beauty and grace. Maclise has been interested in these charming subjects, and he certainly has done wonders with them. I did not see them until months after he had taken them in hand. He calls them his 'American blazing beauties.' As to the Sharples portraits of Washington and his wife: 'When in Boston I saw the portraits by Stuart, so also others most in favor with American friends. None, however, excepting the Sharples, convey to my mind his capacity, benignity, dignity, or grace. These portraits are unknown in America, but when the people see them, and are left to judge for themselves, they are safe to accept the Sharples as their national portrait. They care not as to the nationality of the artist; what they want is reality. When Washington was in the flesh, his country had just secured its national independence. Art was comparatively unknown, and it is fortunate there are existing such presentments of the nation's founder; equally satisfactory is it they have until now remained in England. They would have been kiln-dried by 'furnace' power had they re-crossed the Atlantic. In good time the Americans will learn that the unnatural dry heat of their stoves in winter is as wholly destructive of all paintings as of the fair countenances of their lovely women. Such portraits as those Washingtons are the charge of the whole human race, and should be cared for as the heritage of future ages. They should be placed out of the power of injury by fire or heat. A few winter seasons in an American private house would finish them, and render them the utter wrecks others have already become.

CHARLES DICKENS."

Thackeray also expressed himself:—

"I have only seen engravings of the Stuart portrait. It can never rank with the Sharples. It has too much austerity, and is wanting in life.

W. M. THACKERAY."

#### THE PORTRAITS OF FULTON AND HIS WIFE.

With reference to the portrait of Robert Fulton, the man who shares very largely the fame of first adapting the steam-engine to purposes of navigation, General Grant was not alone in his desire to get access to it. Like all others of Sharples' oil-portraits, excepting the Washingtons, Fulton and his wife's portraits, they were left unfinished. They were purchased from

Mrs. Sharples in that state. Romney or Bird finished the portrait of Fulton, Maclise that of his wife. Since their sale by Mrs. Sharples, two individuals only have owned them; both more than eccentric, the present possessor leading a secluded life, and declining to allow any visitors to his costly collection of paintings, mostly portraits of distinguished persons.

Fulton was an attached friend of Sharples. In his early years, as is well known, he worked and maintained himself as an artist. There are several portraits of his execution known in England. When in London he was one of Benjamin West's family household; he and Sharples being sympathizing friends, the latter desired to paint his portrait, seeing he was a very rising man in his newly adopted profession as an engineer. It is understood in England that Benjamin West, during the period of his residence with him in London, painted a portrait of Fulton; its existence in England has so far not been traced. The hope is that Fulton's family in America may possess it. Sharples himself was a skilled mechanic, and speaks of Fulton as having greatly served him when in America. It is not a little remarkable that Fulton succeeded in building a steamer capable of propulsion under water. He accomplished this and much more, and he was the father of torpedoes.

America has allowed the name of Fulton to drop, in a degree, through the gridiron by which she usually tests her greatest sons. Undoubtedly he was the pioneer in the application of steam-power to purposes of navigation, and therefore ranks among the highest of the world's discoverers. He was a man of the greatest practical genius, and despite that a hundred years have passed into the abyss since he made his discoveries, yet in the matter of torpedoes the nations of the world are only just waking up to the knowledge that he lived. In the most important feature, that of a submarine vessel for war purposes, he was entirely successful; and it is a matter of history that he produced a torpedo which destroyed a vessel anchored in the Bay of New York. The French and English Governments, in common with that of his native country, failed in realizing the true nature and power of his inventions, though they were none the less important, through their obtusity. At the time, his torpedo was looked upon, not as a substitute for the ordinary modes of warfare, but as a useful and powerful addition to the means of ordinary defense. He managed, even in his time, to keep the British fleet in a continued state of consternation while on the American coast; for although no actual injury was done to any vessel, yet the motions of the squadron in Long

Island Sound were paralyzed, although commanded by Nelson's favorite captain, and the crews kept in a continual state of alarm, through fear of his inventions. His experiments in the matter of submarine artillery, though arrested by his early death, were, it is known, in a very advanced state of practical application. The great discovery with which Fulton's name is inseparably connected, as the principal agent in its creation, is that of navigation by steam. Fulton was acquainted in Birmingham with Watt, who had just then succeeded in giving to his steam-engine the form fitting it for universal application as a prime mover. Fulton worked with Watt, and was a great adept in making his models, and superintended for him the construction of an engine, at a time when few suitable mechanics could be found for such work. This engine reached New York in 1806. He returned to America with it, and immediately constructed a vessel for its application, and in the following year at once succeeded in his bold experiment of running by steam no less than one hundred and fifty miles at a stretch, from New York to Albany. Sailing-craft were oftentimes a week in the voyage; Fulton did the voyage in thirty hours.

Sharples and Fulton held frequent correspondence on artistic and mechanical subjects, when distance separated them from each other. Both were firm believers in the torpedo: had their letters not been lost, we should have seen ere this an astounding development of this destructive engine. A letter from Sharples to Robert Cary expresses a firm conviction that Fulton had it in his power to destroy any fleet; "the mighty invention," he adds, "will some day or another put an end to all naval warfare."

Sharples died in New York, February 26, 1811, and was buried in the Roman Catholic burial-ground of St. Peter's Church, Barclay Street. A large number of the chief residents were present at the funeral. Mr. Moses Rogers, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Dunlap, Mr. Elmendorf, Mr. Charles Wilkes, Mr. Catlin, Mr. Bleecker, and Dr. Kemp, prominent citizens, were the pall-bearers.

#### THE PRIESTLEY AND OTHER PORTRAITS.

At his death, Sharples' widow owned a number of her husband's unfinished portraits in oils; among them ex-Presidents Jefferson, Adams, Madison and his wife, General Hamilton and his wife, Robert Fulton and his wife, who was niece of Chancellor Livingston, and one of the greatest beauties of that day;

Dr. Priestley, and General Hamilton's wife, who also was an especially beautiful woman. All had sat to him; none, however, had been finished when his death occurred. In addition to these, other public men of America had been "rubbed in," but their names could not be traced. President J. J. Hill, of St. Paul, than whom no truer patriot exists in America, is in possession of Jefferson, Adams, Madison and his wife, and General Hamilton.

The portrait of Chief Justice Marshall is a fine presentation of the distinguished jurist, and it is asserted was availed of by more than one artist in executing other paintings of him. This painting is owned by a gentleman in England, who, though assenting to its exhibition in America, would not allow its autotype reproduction in Major Walter's "Memorials of the Washingtons."

There is a fine portrait of De Witt Clinton by Sharples existent in England, but the owner will not consent to its coming to America.

At her husband's death, Mrs. Sharples returned to England, and had a sale of her husband's effects at Bath. With the exception of the unfinished portraits named, and a number of outlined female heads, described by her as "American beauties," referred to by Macready and others, everything was sold at auction. After the sale occurrence many inquiries were received from persons in America, seeking to get possession of their "likenesses," but, alas! the auctioneer had made away with them. Among the clamorers was Dunlap, the American historian, who wrote: "I want to get hold of my portrait unfinished as my friend Sharples left it, and am willing to pay the price same as if he had completed it." Like others, Dunlap could not be accommodated. Some of the series of female heads were little more than "indications," and consequent on black-beetle ravages had to be transferred to new canvases. All evidenced unmistakably lovely women, mostly quite young, and as having been outlined on the canvases for purpose of after completion. The opportunity of finishing never came; and at his death his wife bore them away to England.

#### THE FEMALE PORTRAITS.

Altogether there were ten of these canvases. Seven were left in a more advanced stage than the remainder, and the fair subjects of these seven were Miss Peale, Mrs. Van Rensselaer, Hamilton, Fulton, Field, Jay, and a daughter of Patrick Henry,

the great Southern orator. At this distance of time, with the very slight information there exists for guidance, the names of the others cannot be ascertained. All were recognized charmers of their several localities. At the period of the sketches being made, balls took place in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, and Alexandria: the leading families being generally known to each other, they all met as friends. Only very meager memoranda existed among Mr. Cary's papers as to these sketches, beyond the fact of their purchase from the widow Sharples, together with the other portraits, at the time of realizing her husband's effects after her return to England. He had been working on some of them during the winter of his death, having had offers of considerable sums for them by families in New York. It is clear, therefore, that he intended to finish them. How it came that they were not completed during the period of his first visit, there exists no record. Probably their commission was a private arrangement among the gentry attending the balls graced by the special aspirants, for whose hands in the graceful waltz there would be no lack of gay cavaliers,—whether of North or South need not now be asked,—though future generations of men and women, gentle and simple, will be ever fond of looking at the Sharples delineations of these lovely ones, and through them read what manner were they who held sway in the Court of Washington. If it be not heresy to suggest, may it not be through jealousies of rival charms that Sharples' completion of the beauties was never carried out? This has been given as an explanation of their being in the artist's possession in an unfinished state at the time of his death, and their transmission to England as part of the deceased's belongings. He attended some of the balls, and was by no means indifferent to the charms of lovely women.

The Sharples' portraits, so far as the general public goes, were until recently unknown in America, excepting to the few leading poets and public men traveling abroad, who knew of their whereabouts, and sought them out. The pictures themselves were packed off to England instantly after production, and all that remained to the country were some pastel drawings, made, in the first instance, from sketches executed with the original paintings before his eyes, but which, through multiplication, and in absence of the originals to guide him, grew weaker and weaker, until, like Stuart's portraits, they became mere results of recollection. The evidences of rapid change in the national feeling need no seeking. Boston, the city rightly priding itself in its possession of a genuine Stuart,

has admitted, in free and honorable manner, that the Sharples portraits are "more real," "more human," than the Stuarts. New York, from the first moment of seeing them, never faltered in its judgment. Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Paul, and Cincinnati, the only other places in which the original paintings were exhibited, gave similar verdicts.

The portrait of Hamilton's beautiful wife — a lovely picture — and the artist's gentle, unobtrusive manner had won her husband's heart, and doubtless his chief's earnest request for his interest in Sharples' behalf served to stimulate Hamilton's earnest zeal — all combined, made him the more than friend he proved himself.

In the instance of the heads of female beauties, said to have been "rubbed in" by Sharples during visits to Governor Morris, the Van Rensselaers, and also in Philadelphia and Baltimore, which "rubs in" were, at his death, taken to England and sold by his widow, very successful transfers to new canvases were accomplished under the advice of Maclise given to Macready in regard to them. Sharples himself never attached money value to these, for the reason the amount of work needed to make *pictures* of them always loomed as a spectre before his eyes. But for his love of Hamilton, and not a little through happy remembrance of the handsome women themselves,—he being a man very alive to the charms of the "form divine" and "fascination of the witching countenance," — the "rubbings" would most likely have given place to other heads on the canvases. As Maclise said of these beautiful women, "Any one will recognize them as in the best manner of Romney. The painter Sharples evidently aimed to follow his master, Romney. Each head is treated in thorough Romney style.' Fond associations, running back to Washington and to Hamilton, greatly endeared these to him, as they recalled to mind many happy balls at Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York, and caused these little else than skeletons being clung to in the manner evidenced to the day of his death. Robert Cary must have purchased them of Mrs. Sharples.

It seems little short of a miracle that these charming relics of an eventful historical past, of ever-increasing interest and value in hereafter time, should have escaped, and be in condition for perfect handing down. Maclise's beautiful work upon them, though retaining all the bold and classic style of Sharples' master, Romney, is strongly evidenced in each; they are as fresh as though of yesterday's execution, and the beauteous ones themselves seem to look out of the canvases overjoyed at

their renewed existence. It seem sad to dream of dividing them. They, as girls and women, loved each other after the fashion of rivals in ball assemblies; they voyaged together across the seas, and passed through Maclise's fickle mint ordecal without a murmur, and are now a collection of charming women, dis- coursing eloquently of one of the most eventful periods of the world's history. Marvelous has been the providence watching over them.

Sharples immediately felt at home in America in 1794, and at once drew around him the *élite* of New York and Philadelphia. Originally educated in a Jesuit college and intended for the Romish priesthood, and being, moreover, a man of much ability and generally accomplished, characterized by Jefferson as a "delightful converser," he became "the fashion" in the "best circles." Among his earliest made friends was Colonel Trumbull, who had served as aide-de-camp to Washington, and, having taste and ability in art, had sheathed the sword to ply the brush; and had voyaged to England to study under Benjamin West, having been aided in such object by appointment to official duties in connection with Mr. Jay's embassy. Robert Cary actively engaged himself in behalf of Washington, in moving public men with the object of averting war. Intimacy with Burke helped him. His labors, though prosecuted in privacy, were none the less earnest, causing daily personal communication with Mr. Jay. Sharples was a visitor at his house. He there became acquainted with Trumbull, through mutual love of art, and ultimately they were friends. The newly arrived semi-military artist derived much valuable assistance by thus entering on his new pursuit, and it was owing, in some degree, to this intimacy that Sharples undertook Cary's commission to voyage out and paint his friend Washington.

Major Walter, in his *Memorials*, does not seek to place the two artists, Sharples and Stuart, on a par. However greatly Sharples excelled with the Washingtons, Stuart, he admits, was unquestionably the greater artist.

#### THE PRIESTLEY PORTRAIT.

Trumbull was a frequent visitor at Sharples' house in New York. On Sharples going to Philadelphia to paint a portrait of Priestley, the eminent philosopher and electrician, he was accompanied by Trumbull, and they boarded there together during the few weeks devoted to the execution of that portrait, a very

excellent work. The Priestley portrait, according to memoranda left by Mrs. Sharples, was painted at the advice and through the interest of Benjamin Franklin's son, who, strange to say, remained to his death a zealous loyalist, and to the last publicly avowed, as his earnest conviction, that "the United States would have developed more rapidly had they continued under the British flag." The Priestley portrait was entirely a speculation, believing that it would lead to orders from families in Philadelphia and Baltimore. The great scientist and divine had been long under great suffering, and died very shortly after the portrait was finished.

## CRITICISMS OF THE PORTRAITS.

The *New York Evening Post*, which, in 1854, under the Poet Bryant's pen, introduced the portraits to public notice in America, thus alludes to their return, accompanied by Mary, Washington's mother:—

The gem of the newly shown pictures, in historical interest and pecuniary value, is a portrait of Mary, the mother of Washington. It was executed by Capt. Middleton, of the British Army, who was a trained artist before he obtained his military commission, and who lived for a time in this country. At that period, of course, he did not dream of the future fame of Mary Washington's son, and he was probably influenced to paint her picture by the beauty of the young matron, which was well worth reproducing for its own sake without regard to any other considerations. The portrait was very highly valued by Washington, who considered his mother the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld. In removal to Philadelphia in a wagon, it was badly injured by contact with a piece of furniture, to the great regret of the owner. In consequence of its damaged condition it was not conspicuously hung at Mount Vernon, and Washington finally sent it to England for restoration. It was confided to the hands of his friend Cary, and there is no record to show that it ever passed out of the latter's possession. Edmund Burke and Lord Erskine took an interest in the matter of its restoration, and the work was intrusted to Bird, the Royal Academician. The painter did his work admirably, and no trace of the accident which happened to it is now visible in the picture. After Washington's death several applications were made to Mrs. Morgan, of Albany, who was a friend of Sharples and of the Custis family, to ascertain what should be done with the portrait. No reply to these inquiries is on record; and after Cary's death the portrait remained in his family. It descended to Mrs. Edwards, a daughter of Cary's sister, and her daughter is now the owner. Mary Washington is represented as a singularly lovely woman, with her charms just fully ripened. A resemblance to her great son is distinctly traceable in her features. Her complexion is fair, and her hair of a light auburn color.

Another portrait painted by Capt. Middleton is that of Mary Phillipse, Washington's early love. In some way it got among the effects of Sharpes, which, after his death in this city, were sent to England. They included a number of unfinished portraits in oils, which were sold partly by auction at Bath, and most of them were there purchased by the Cary family. These outlined portraits were afterward, at the instance of Washington Irving, and through the agency of Macready and Charles Dickens, worked up and finished by Maclise, of the Royal Academy. They comprise, besides the Phillipse portrait, pictures of Robert Fulton and his beautiful wife (Miss Livingston), Chief-Justice Marshall, Priestley, Mrs. Van Rensselaer, the wife of Alexander Hamilton (Miss Schuyler), Angelica Peale, Miss Jay, Miss Field, and Patrick Henry's daughter. All of the women portrayed were of remarkable attractiveness in feature and expression, and with the exception of Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Henry, who were lovely brunettes, their portraits may be regarded as types of blonde beauty. All were painted wearing low-necked dresses, except Miss Phillipse and Mrs. Hamilton. The latter's gray gown comes up to the throat, and is fastened around the waist with a blue ribbon. It is a notable fact that not a single article of jewelry is visible in any of the female portraits, including those of Mary and Martha Washington.

E. W. Morse, the able and well-known New York correspondent of a Boston journal, has thus given expression to opinions generally held in regard to the paintings:—

“What a nucleus these paintings would make for a National Gallery!” was a remark that expressed the keen appreciation of the speaker for the great value of a little collection of portraits, not far from a hundred years old, known as the famous Sharpes portraits of Washington, and his wife, Martha, now resting on American soil, where some day they must find a permanent home. There is now added to the priceless collection the portrait of Mary, the mother of Washington, as she appeared to Captain Middleton, a portrait-painter by profession, who had studied under great English masters, and who was then trying the fortunes of war as an officer in the colonial force, was painted a few months before Mary's illustrious son George was born, and toward the end of the last century it was sent to London, to be repaired. For ninety years it has been in England, and has had a curious history. It was painted in 1731, and was injured during a journey which Washington made to headquar-

ters in Philadelphia. The painting had been carelessly packed in a wagon containing household furniture, and the head of a bedpost had ground a hole through the center of the canvas by chafing during the journey from Virginia to Philadelphia. For many years thereafter the painting remained in a wretched condition—so wretched, in fact, that it was hung in the bedroom of Washington and his wife, to avoid remark as to its maimed state, and which prevented its being placed in a more conspicuous position.

The exquisite charm of the face of this more than lovely Mary is in the contour. Her thick, wavy, reddish-brown hair is brushed back from a low forehead, and is tied with a pink ribbon behind. A luxuriant curl rests on her left shoulder. Blue eyes, a charming mouth, and a small nose, are features of a beautifully modeled head, which is elegantly poised on a long and graceful neck. Her gown is of slate-colored silk, cut low in the neck. A fine white lace kerchief passes over each shoulder, the ends being caught at the top of the bodice, setting off the neck with delightful effect.

The others are portraits of belles, nearly all of old Knickerbocker stock of the Revolutionary period, and one of pre-Revolutionary days, which the gallant Captain Middleton also painted. This Middleton is a portrait of "Mary Phillipse," with whom Washington was in love in his younger days, and whose beauty does credit to his taste in such matters. Less brilliant in complexion than Washington's mother, Miss Phillipse is of another type of the Colonial beauties of the Old Dominion. Her dark hair is brushed back and powdered over her forehead, curls of the natural color falling over her shoulder. Her gown is also of slate-color, and a white lace kerchief caught at the corsage, with a bow of a deep golden shade, sets off a neck of rare loveliness. One notices the curious circumstances that all of these charmers had unusually long and well-rounded necks. Miss Jay's portrait is a full-face front, the heads of most of the others being turned slightly to the right. And what a bright, intelligent, wide-awake girl she must have been, fascinating the New York, Albany, and Philadelphia beaux, we may well believe, with her sparkling blue eyes and her nimble wit. She was called "*Miss Impudence*" by her family, and Sharples, who painted this and the portraits that I shall describe later, evidently caught with rare skill the salient features of her character, and succeeded in depicting her vivacity and sprightliness in every lineament of her face. Here is her appearance: a head smaller than most of the others, hair,

brownish-red, brushed off a low forehead and piled high on her head, a bit of blue ribbon in its coils; a deep-red gown, cut low, with lace over the shoulders, and a full-blown rose in the corsage; regular features full of animation, and a long, rather slender neck — withal a charming portrait, excellent in drawing and full of color. One sees a bit of Venetian blue landscape in the background of the portrait of Mrs. Van Rensselaer, which justifies the artist in placing a broad-brimmed, dark-straw hat, trimmed with bits of blue ribbon, on the pretty head of the lady, whose wine-colored gown is cut low in the neck, the lace kerchief over her shoulders being tied at the bodice with a blue ribbon. Sharples was not so successful with his portrait of Patrick Henry's black-haired daughter. Nor was she dressed as becomingly as the Knickerbocker maidens. Robert Fulton's wife, a niece of Chancellor Livingston, wears a jacket of old gold color, with two folds of lace crossing her bosom. The picture is not so well composed, nor is the lady as pretty as some of the others. Modesty or some other reason compelled the wife of General Hamilton, who was Miss Schuyler, to fill the neck of her frock with lace, and even to wear a ruff.

Loveliest of all is the portrait of Angelica Peale, a daughter of the artist, Charles Willson Peale, who studied under Copley in Boston, and West in England, and who commanded a company at several battles in the Revolutionary war. Miss Peale's beauty must have been the reason why she was selected to place the laurel wreath on the head of Washington when he entered New York to assume the office of President. Sharples has certainly painted a portrait of an extraordinarily lovely girl, and in a free, Titianesque style that accords perfectly with the subject. It is romantic treatment as compared with that of the others, but it suits the charms of face and figure that this daughter of the soldier-painter possessed. Her dark-brown hair is parted and waved back, a fillet of jewels binding it over her brow. Her gown is of rather loose white stuff, cut very low, and somewhat squarer in the neck than those of the others, a spray of lily of the valley at the center. Over each shoulder falls the end of what seems to be a scarf of pale blue. Imagine, now, this girl in an easy, unconventional, or, to be more exact, a dreamy and slightly languid attitude, beautiful in every feature, and of a rich, full-moulded type of beauty, and you may get an idea of how the Knickerbocker youths' heads must have been turned a hundred years ago by the presence of this fair maid. The charms of this galaxy of Colonial and Revolutionary belles have furnished such a fascinating theme we have only

space to refer to the portraits of Robert Fulton, said to be the only one in existence, Chief Justice Marshall, and Priestley, all by Sharples, and all of exceeding interest. The whole collection ought to find a permanent home in the Capitol at Washington, for it is of inestimable historical value to the American people, and is worthy of the most serious attention by our portrait-painters.

Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, one of the ablest art writers in America, an admitted authority, has thus recorded of the portraits, in the *New York Independent* :—

“The series of portraits should not fail of a visit from any one who ventures to call himself a ‘good American.’ And apart from their high historic interest, four or five of the pictures are well worth the attention of all who love good art. These include the famous Sharples portraits of Washington and his wife—a profile of Mrs. Washington and a profile and a full-face of her husband.

“Sharples was an English artist who was sent to America by Robert Cary, Washington’s personal friend and London agent, for the express purpose of painting these pictures. Romney, the best portraitist of his time in England, had been Sharples’ teacher, and had recommended him to Cary. The portraits were begun at Mount Vernon, and Mrs. Washington’s was finished there, though the General gave Sharples final sittings in Philadelphia. All three were sent at once to England, and there remained in the possession of Cary’s collateral descendants, until 1854, when they were loaned for exhibition to the New York Historical Society. The greatest interest in them was then excited, and through the exertions of Washington Irving and other prominent citizens they would have been purchased, but that business complications in the Cary family rendered their sale impossible. Some four years ago they were again sent over the water, doubtless in the hope that the Government would buy them for the nation. But though they were shown in many cities East and West; though their authenticity has never been disputed; though their artistic value is very evident, and though Washington is portrayed in a way far more in accordance with our innate ideas of probability than upon any other canvas extant—not excepting those by Gilbert Stuart—they were again allowed to return to foreign keeping. Once more they are on American soil. Should their present exhibition, unfortunately, but unavoidably, a very short one, prove the slightest vitality

of interest on the public's part, they will immediately be returned to their owners, who are unwilling to incur the great expense and risk of transportation and long exhibition in the face of utter public apathy. There is only one thing to be said about them—they *ought* to be purchased for the nation. It is a duty Congress owes to the people, to the memory of Washington, and to its own reputation for patriotism and good sense. It does not need Washington's assertion, in a letter to Cary, "It is agreed all hands that his (Sharples') two portraits of myself are, so far as likeness goes, by far the best of the many made"; it does not need the strong preference expressed by Irving and many others in New York; it does not need Emerson's words from England, saying, "I would willingly have crossed the Atlantic if only to have looked on these portraits, so priceless to our people"; it does not need General Grant's decision when he saw them not many years ago in England, "They are the likenesses of the man; . . . and anybody can see in that face all that we know him to have been,"—it does not need any of this to convince us, if we have eyes to see the canvases, or a heart to imagine their originals, that they are treasures of incomparable value. Stuart's version of the great man's face has, for want of a better, imposed itself upon us as *the* likeness to be respected.

In the Sharples portrait we see him a little earlier in life, and the mouth has much more the aspect it wears in the Peale portrait, painted at about the age of forty. The picture is life size, and somewhat less than half-length, the hands not being visible. The right shoulder is turned a little toward the spectator, and the head turned a little over it, showing the face nearly though not quite full, with the eyes meeting ours. The pose is instinct with vitality, vigor, and dignity—the bearing at once that of the soldier and that of the statesman. The dress is military—a blue coat with gold buttons and epaulettes, a white stock and ruffle, the hair powdered, of course. The vivid blue of the deeply set, not large, but potent and expressive eyes, is familiar to us from the Stuart pictures; but the strong modeling of the cheeks and chin, revealing the bony structure beneath, the fine, though slightly depressed, line of the nose, and, above all, the beautiful expression of the vigorous, yet sympathetic and almost pathetic mouth—these are traits we find for the first time, and traits which for the first time convince us, to our entire satisfaction, that thus and so Washington must indeed have looked. Our eyes assist us a good deal toward forming our impressions of a man's character; and quite as much when they are turned on painted records as when they rest on living

faces. I cannot but believe that if *this* portrait and not the unsympathetic, somewhat cold — may I venture to say a trifle pompous and pedantic looking — face which Stuart left, had been known to us and believed in by us from childhood, our feeling toward Washington would have been different from that which many of us have to-day ; not more admiring, perhaps, but more affectionate, more reverent — altogether more *human*. Must it be that future generations shall be deprived of so unique an aid to sympathetic understanding ?

Moreover, as I have said, the work is delightful, simply considered as a work of art — a picture which, even if it had no name at all, we would gladly hang upon our walls to “live with.” The handling is bold and clever, and though the shadows are a trifle dark — the result perhaps of age — the color and the tone of the canvas are quite admirable. The whites are treated on a very yellowish key, harmonizing beautifully with the deep brown background, the dark blue coat, and virile complexion, which, I may add, shows none of that unnatural pinkishness which is so disturbing in the Boston original from Stuart’s brush.

The profile of Mrs. Washington stands next in artistic as well as in historic interest. Here the white kerchief and cap and the blue-and-white-striped ribbon which encircles the latter, are grayish, not yellowish, in tone ; and as the background is very dark and the dress black, the general effect is rather somber. But it is very harmonious and artistic, none the less, and this, too, is a picture precious even apart from the personality it shows. The profile of the General is in civilian’s dress — black, with but little of the white collar and ruffle showing ; and, though interesting too, has by no means the beauty or the charm of the full face.

Together with these three pictures hangs the only known portrait of Washington’s mother, Mary, which, from extant letters of his own, is known to have hung, in a mutilated condition, in her son’s bedroom at the time of Sharpe’s visit ; that permission to have it repaired was refused, because the General disliked to part with it, and feared repairing might mean alteration ; that it disappeared after his death ; that its existence in England was always believed in ; that Emerson tried in vain to find it ; and that now it *has* been found, and its history satisfactorily traced. It was painted by an English officer named Middleton, a few months before the birth of Washington ; when sent to England was restored by an R. A. named Bird ; and has since been owned by members of the Cary family. Its purely

artistic value is by no means so great as that of the Sharples three. But this value in high potency we may do without in presence of the only existing likeness of such a woman. A beautiful young woman she is too, with large, full, yet sweet, and refined features and majestic bearing, quite the sort of mother such a son should have had, and quite the sort that contemporary accounts of her beauty would lead us to expect. Her complexion is fair, and her hair light brown, rolled back over a low cushion in front, falling in a single large curl over the bare left shoulder, which is turned toward the spectator, and tied with a bit of pink ribbon. Her low-cut dress is of a lilac shade, and a bertha of muslin and lace is tucked in around her neck, and tied in front. These four pictures, I repeat, will be sold, but will *not* be separated in the sale. Surely some one will be found to purchase them either for himself or for the nation, if the nation's representatives refuse the privilege.

When Sharples returned for the second time to this country he began a great number of portraits of men and women well known in the "upper circles" of the day. In many cases he made but outline sketches, to be completed when opportunity should allow, and he died in his home in Greenwich Street, New York, while a number were still incomplete. These were taken by his wife to England, and there finished by other hands. Now they are on exhibition here, together with the originals just named.

A comparison is interesting, as proving the decadence of English art in the generation which came after Sharples. He was not well known as a painter, but his work is such that it charms the most critical eye. His unfinished canvases were completed by men of higher place in the world's esteem than he — some of them by the famous Maclise — but are each and all inferior in every way to his own results.

Among them hangs a portrait of Robert Fulton, better painted than most of the others; which is, I believe, the only likeness of him in existence. And still better painted is that of the great chemist and theologian, Priestley, whom Sharples went to Philadelphia to portray. The drawing is good and the expression lifelike and satisfying; and though the scheme of color and tone is entirely different from that of either of the Washingtons, the handling makes one feel that Sharples himself had a greater share in it than in its companions. It is a good and interesting picture, as well as a pleasing likeness of a notable man. I may add that, in spite of the entire difference in the coloring of the two men, the growth of the hair, the shape of the forehead, and

the line of the eyebrows in the Priestley reminded me very strongly of the same features in his great-grandson, the late H. H. Richardson.

The *Boston Transcript*, of 4th November, in its Art Notes, dealt critically with the paintings as follows:—

There is a tendency at present to forget Washington. His character and principles are unpopular; the conviction is widespread that he would characterize present political methods with a degree of Western democratic severity. Times have changed since 1776. In fact, the spirit of Washington and his times has fallen into marvelous discredit. There are some, however, who still hold to the principles that drove Washington and his circle in their task of making a nation; some who find in the men of the Revolution mental qualities, traits of character, details of life, that seem somehow wanting in the incumbents of similar positions nowadays. To them, the new Washington will be an unusual source of pleasure. On the whole, however, it is hardly exact to call the Sharples portrait a "new Washington"; for to those who have studied the character of the man with admiration and wonder, it will seem a very old portrait indeed, very old and familiar, and the chances are that the old Stuart portrait will give place to the comparatively unknown Sharples; for there has always been in the former a something inharmonious with the character of George Washington as it develops under study. It is one-sided, giving little of the religious element, little of the manly humility, little of the grave thoughtfulness and calm determination that are so marked in this most honorable man. It is an ideal picture, notable for its beauty and its majestic dignity.

But the Sharples portrait is very different. Here one sees painted those qualities of thought—philosophical, yet in a measure ideal—of following resolution, of kindness and benignity, of religious reverence, and withal of physical energy—all those qualities which one knows were Washington's, but are unexpressed in other portraits. The picture has personality, friendliness. One is drawn toward it as all were drawn to the great original in life. Most certainly this is the Washington his admirers most will love.

The profile portrait is also interesting in the same way. Here, however, it is impossible to read in the eyes and the mouth the qualities shown so well in the first-named portrait. It shows well the strong modeling of the face, and those elements of

physical strength, resolution, and execution, that added the final roundness to this remarkable personality. It is a fascinating picture, but rather of Washington the civilian at rest in his own home, than Washington the statesman, patriot, and warrior.

The talent of Stuart was wholly at home in creating the beautiful Martha Washington at the Art Museum. The Sharples portrait cannot conflict with this.

Of course the deepest interest centers in the two portraits of Washington; the interest, that is, of all true Americans, of those who know no way of *guiding* the future but by the past, of all patriots, students, and hero-worshipers. Still, the unique portrait of Mary Washington, painted only a few months before the birth of her son, is full of unusual interest — a really beautiful woman, as Washington reverently said, strikingly like her son. One can easily trace, even in a work which is rather wanting in individuality and character, evidences of those religious and thoughtful and ideal qualities which were deeply characteristic of Washington himself. Middleton, the painter, was evidently only an amateur, and failed to catch clearly those characteristics his subject must have possessed. But the picture is valuable in the extreme, being the only one in the world.

The remaining portraits are chiefly of American beauties of the time of the Revolution; and very beautiful they were, many of them, particularly Washington's first love, and Mrs. Jay. These female portraits, however, were only sketched by Sharples, being finished by men perhaps more celebrated, but certainly less truly artists.

For artistically the Sharples portraits are admirable. Although a pupil of Romney, the painter seems to copy his master not at all; his excellence is almost equal, but very different. Throughout, the work is vigorous, earnest, and simple, without a hint of the triviality and falsity which pretty soon characterized English art. The military portrait of Washington is singularly strong in almost every way — artistically and technically strong and pure in color, fine in tone, and frank and direct in execution. The rest of the Sharples portraits are wretched, so far as art is concerned, being often characterless and falsely pink and white.

But, after all, the value of the pictures lie wholly in their pricelessness as memorials, and the full-front Washington can only be looked on as a work which should be, and eventually must be, one of the most precious treasures of the nation.

We have no opportunity here to advocate the purchase of these pictures by the country; probably such counsel would be thrown away. Our Government has proclaimed its plan with regard to

art, and it is hopeless to expect anything but determined antagonism in that quarter to those questions which in civilized countries receive strongest support. The Government will not buy these portraits, for very manifest reasons, but eventually they will become the property of the nation; and it may be just as well in the meantime they remain in private hands; but that they should never go back to England is of course a foregone conclusion.

Immediately on the Sharples collection arriving in Boston, Sydney Dickinson, well known as an accomplished and competent critical writer, addressed himself to the Portraits in terms as follows in the *Boston Journal* of 6th November:—

This collection of portraits may fairly be said to be the most valuable and interesting to Americans of any that have ever been exhibited in this country. It includes the Sharples paintings of George Washington, and Martha his wife, of Robert Fulton and his wife, of Dr. Priestley, and Chief Justice Marshall, and the Middleton portraits of Mary, the mother of Washington, and of Mary Phillipse, for whom, in early life, Washington is said to have had an attachment.

The chief interest of the exhibition centers naturally in the portraits of Washington himself. Of these there are two—one full face, the other a profile; the former in military garb, the latter in the evening dress of a well-to-do civilian. These works describe Washington at an earlier age than that presented in the well-known Stuart portraits; and although they are inferior to the best of Stuart's canvases as works of art, they have every indication of being equally good likenesses, if not better. To us they have a stronger interest than the Stuart portraits, as showing us more truly the appearance of the first great American at the time when he achieved liberty and superintended the building of a new nation. There is remarkable sincerity in these works, and evidence of accurate observation and sympathetic workmanship, which give them a value far above any other portraits upon this subject. The profile portrait of Martha Washington is no less interesting and valuable, showing a woman of cool, self-reliant spirit, homely virtues, and intelligent mind,—the worthy helpmeet of the Father of his Country. There is in the descriptions of both these personages a modest, unostentatious character, which gives a better revelation than scores of written volumes could do of the quiet, courageous, patient spirit of the generation which achieved independence for us. Superior to these pictures as works of art, if possessing

less vital interest for the general public, are the Sharples portraits of Robert Fulton, Dr. Priestley, and Chief Justice Marshall; all of which are beautifully painted, and have few rivals in works of the present day in expression of vitality and intelligence.

In works of historical interest, high, artistic qualities are of secondary importance; and it is in consideration of this fact that we regard the most interesting picture in the collection to be that of Washington's mother. This was painted by a man of mediocre ability, Captain Middleton, an officer attached to the Colonial force, who studied under able masters of his day, and, as the portrait shows, had absorbed some of their manner and skill in giving delicate and idealistic expression to descriptions of his sitters. How much of the handiwork of the original artist remains to the present day it would be difficult to say. It bears evidence of considerable improvement since it left its author's hand, and is explained in the statement that the picture was so badly damaged while in Washington's possession during his campaigns, that it was found necessary to transfer it to a new canvas and otherwise restore it—a work in which Mr. Sharples himself had some interest, even if he did not actually participate in it. Letters of Washington himself remove all doubt about the authenticity of the portrait, and it stands as an unique and priceless memorial of a woman whose personal appearance is otherwise unknown. We have other portraits of Washington himself, but none of his mother; and it should in some way be retained upon the soil which saw her birth and that of her illustrious son. It is probable, indeed, that this portrait, as well as the two of Washington himself, and that of Martha, his wife, will be purchased for eternal preservation in America. Such should be their disposition by every rule of reason and patriotism. Meanwhile, lest this plan may fail, no one should miss seeing these most valuable works.

LBAP '19











LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 783 386 0